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## THE INFLUENCE OF THE DISTRICT NURSE

By MARGARET D. DRIER

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WHEN Pastor Fliedner, in 1836, re-created the German Deaconess Order, the prototype of the modern nurse, he introduced one of the greatest movements this last century has known. Florence Nightingale and her Crimean nurses; the Red Cross nurses the world over; the trained nurses in war and epidemics, carrying skill, knowledge, and mercy; the modern hospital with its equipment of skilled nurses; the nurse in the family; and last, but not least, the district nurses among the poor—all these protective forces of the world date their origin to that little room in Kaiserswerth with its two hospital beds and one nurse, and were sent forth by the inspiration of a great faith. District nursing is as old as the nursing profession, but the increase of district nurses well illustrates the new spirit of the times. In the past we were content to build our hospitals and open our doors, but to-day we go out and carry our help to those who need it instead of waiting for them to come to us. It is the new spirit which we are beginning to see everywhere, and it seems to be in striking harmony with the ideal of the Master given two thousand years ago when He said, "I was sick and ye visited me."

Let us consider for a moment what a nurse stands for in her district work. She enters the home when there is illness, not as an intruder, but with the right to enter because she brings help; she carries with her not only the knowledge and skill to care for the child and help the mother, but incidentally she teaches the need of cleanliness, helps in choosing food—possibly teaching how to cook it; shows the need of care in contagious diseases, and, best of all, carries the spirit of friendliness and helpfulness into the homes, on the principle that any privilege that education or knowledge may give to any one citizen must be shared with all.

It often seems to me that the nurse stands as an individual for that ideal of intercourse between man and man and nation and nation which is surely coming. She carries with her the flag of truce. She goes unarmed. She practically places herself at the mercy of those to whom she ministers, with the simple faith that the trust she gives must be reciprocated. Her mission is primarily to relieve suffering. If there is anyone who has seen a child suffer,—and who has not?—how would it be possible not to give in richest, fullest measure to relieve that suffering? If in our hour of need knowledge or money has placed at our command the skill of a trained nurse, can we accept that privilege without sharing

it with all who suffer. Many are asking, with the little boy of whom Mr. Poole has spoken, who, when he prayed, "Give us this day our daily bread," asked, "How many is us?"

It would be easy to prove that from an economic point of view nothing could be wiser and more prudent than to send our nurses among the poor; it could easily be proven, also, that it would be much cheaper for us to do that work than to wait till illness has come, and to combat it as we are attempting to combat the plague of tuberculosis at present, but prudence is never a motive strong enough to win. No appeal to material consideration is ever going to win.

"It is not the grapes of Canaan that repay,  
But the high faith that failed not by the way."

There is one motive, and only one, strong enough to give us victory, and that is love—love for our fellow-men and love for our country.

We know that the trained eye is readier to see beauty and the trained ear quicker to detect harmony, but is it true that we see in the dwarfed, stunted lives around us the possibilities of the fulfilment of a perfect manhood and womanhood, and has our soul such a love for its fellow-man that we strive to make this beauty possible, and out of the din of the city noises and the cry of the children endeavor to create the harmony for which we have been trained to listen? It is only a great love that can see the possibilities, and if the eye of a Michael Angelo can see in the huge block of marble a David, and can never rest content till he has made that statue the best he can, how can we rest till we have given to every man, woman, and child that has come within our gates the opportunity to win a larger life, to grow into the full measure of their capacity, and to hew out for themselves a destiny proportioned to their gifts? It is those lost possibilities which haunt us. It is easy to kill, but it requires a great soul to arouse the dormant energies, to vitalize them, and to make them creative forces for good.

At one with the love of our fellow-men is the love of country,—our country,—which is even to-day the hope of all the oppressed, the haven of the hunted, the vision of righteousness for those who suffer wrong. Consider the idealism and expectation with which those children of the Old World come to us and realize how far their hopes are from the possibility of fruition! They bring into our country their strength, their industry, their idealism, their faith in us, and are forced to meet and accept conditions which sap their vitality and which make their very industry their curse. In spite of societies for the protection of immigrants, our friends who come to us from other countries are met and welcomed in this land of liberty by sharpers,—men and women in numbers,—who for

the sake of money are willing to do them wrong, and in them the motive of gain is so much stronger than is the motive of righteousness with us that they win and we lose nine times out of ten, and we permit them to barter away our good name. And yet "as these little ones shall fare our fates are cast."

But love of country will win, for again it will grow into a passion, and in its rising tide sweep forward all the protective forces that make for human brotherhood. And among those whom we send forth to rekindle the faith of others in us there is no one better fitted for the task than the district nurse.

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THE key-note to good nursing is to put forth your best efforts with sympathy. Success in nursing depends largely upon our ability to overcome our own physical desires. We must be willing to give up many comforts—even needed rest, if necessary—when duty demands it for the welfare and comfort of those in our charge. We have entered upon a work dealing with human lives, and nothing should interfere with the rendering of needed services when required. It is no small undertaking, but a strong and vigorous constitution, toned down and balanced with moral character, will make us winners in our chosen profession.

Perfection shall be our aim, our ideal; but let us not make the mistake of becoming despondent in not obtaining our ideals, for ideals cannot be attained. Light-houses which are planted at the sea-shore serve as guides to passing steamers and prevent them from crashing against jagged rocks or mooring upon treacherous shoals, but they do not make good dwelling-houses. So our ideals of perfection—they serve to guide us in the devious pathway of life, but we cannot dwell in them. They serve to guide us to our best endeavors by illuminating our pathway and inspiring us to attain to higher levels.

Above all, let us be happy. God made the heavens and the great, broad earth, and placed us in it in order that we might be happy. By being happy ourselves, we make others happy. If we are not happy, it is our own fault and not our friends'. He who can be contented and happy under all circumstances and conditions possesses that which kings can neither buy nor steal.

And let us be womanly women, and not professional women. We cannot afford to sacrifice womanhood for professional prestige. A professional nurse devoid of womanhood possesses neither sense nor sex, and should not be seen in the sickroom. Let us ever retain the sympathy which true womanhood extends to all those who suffer, and thereby increase our usefulness to our fellow-beings.—*From the Class Address given by Miss Davis, People's Hospital, Chicago, Ill.*